



VAMC Anchor

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Outreach to Homeless Veterans



by Sean Lonergan, LICSW

As some of you may be aware, there has been an increase in the number of people holding signs that say “Homeless Veteran” and asking for money on our streets in the City of Providence and surrounding areas. The Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program at the Providence VA Medical Center would like all VA employees to know that we are committed to reaching out to these individuals and are actively engaged in outreach efforts.

As the Providence VA Homeless Outreach Worker, I have been in contact with many of the persons you may have seen at Memorial Boulevard, Valley Street, Dean Street, Pontiac Avenue, and other locations. When I contact them, Homeless Veterans are provided with dates and times that outreach is available, the hours of our VA Homeless Clinic, and a copy of the “Street Sheet” with listings of shelters, food pantries, soup kitchens, referrals for clothing, etc. RIPTA bus tickets are provided so they can make it to their VA appointments.

Please call my VA cell phone (401-639-5423) if you see anyone wearing shirts or hats that have military insignia on them or a sign saying “Homeless Veteran.” I will go and provide outreach to them. I expect more and more Veterans to appear on our streets as times get tougher. Just be aware we are doing our best to help those who are in need of services.

As VA employees, we are all drawn to be compassionate towards those in need whom we are dedicated to serving. However, we would also remind staff to be mindful that not everyone who holds a sign saying “Homeless Vet” is a Veteran or is eligible for VA services and that there are risks involved in engaging in outreach informally.

Lastly, every year the VA participates in the annual Operation Stand Down. This is a major outreach event for homeless Veterans. Tents are set up for sleeping (continued on page 3)



July 2010

Rachel Jensen (Dental)
Vinh Ngo (Dental)
Meagan Raposo (Diagnostic Imaging)
Jessica Burgess (Diagnostic Imaging)
Mary Gaiser (Diagnostic Imaging)
Steven Kudzma (Housekeeping)
Kathryn Denton (HIMS)
Francis Sullivan (Medical)
Kristin Heron (MHBSS)
Rebecca McHugh (MHBSS)
Edward Selby (MHBSS)
Diana Stewart (MHBSS)
Trevor Wu (MHBSS)
Aygul Cetiner (Nursing)
Katarzyna Demirkan (Nursing)
Lauren Sisson (Nursing)
Christine Botelho (Nursing)
Arthur Manchester (Nursing)
Jared Scott (Nursing)
Gary Smith (Nutrition & Food Service)
David Ahern (MHBSS)

The Future of the VHA

At the recent Public Affairs Conference, I had the privilege of hearing VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel talk about the future of the Veterans Health Administration or VHA. He was genuinely appreciative of all the great things that we're doing in the field to take care of the Veterans, and he noted that—contrary to what we may think—positive stories about the VA outweigh negative stories by a margin of 3-1. He also spoke highly of our integrated mental health programs (believes they are the “best in the country”), our continually commendable patient satisfaction scores, as well as our success (continued on page 2)



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Director's Spotlight

With Bill Burney on hiatus for a few more days, Penny Nechanicky, Acting Associate Director, volunteered to "step up" and contribute the following inspirational message.

I know you have heard. My last day in Providence is September 3rd. I know my exit is quick, but so was my entrance! Before I knew what was happening, I went from volunteering for a 2-week detail as Acting Associate Director to an almost 9-month adventure that changed my career path! Before I go, however, I want to let you know I am taking each of you with me. The Providence VAMC family has become part of me. I was always impressed with the camaraderie and warmth when I visited as Service Line Director. "They are good people," I would think to myself after my visits. Now I know I was right.

It's hard to jump onto a moving train. That's what it felt like when I first arrived. I had to take my time and listen to know where to start and how I could help. I had many questions, and you tolerated them--patiently answering and completely describing issues, procedures, and barriers. We tackled many, and we even succeeded at a few!

I've been lucky throughout my career to be able to use each assignment as an opportunity to learn and build my skills for the next job. My experience with the Providence VAMC is no different. Yes, I am moving out of the Medical Center and back to a program office position. But let me tell you about what I am about to launch. The Office of Clinical Consultation and Compliance is a new program office based in VA Central Office. I will be the Regional Director in Cincinnati, and my office will work with VISN 5, 10, 11, and 12. Our mission will be to support the introduction of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) principles throughout VHA. ISO principles promote the adoption of a process approach for developing, implementing, or improving the effectiveness of quality management systems. In other words, consistency of practice and standardization of processes is our priority. The ISO standards have been used to create excellence in industry; now we hope to do the same for VHA.

During my time here, I have seen you strive for excellence, and I've seen you have fun doing it! Excellence takes work. It takes a team willing to look at themselves critically but without criticism. It takes a supportive environment where there is no blame. It requires each individual to commit to making this a better place. Thanks for all you've done and continue to do. More importantly, thanks for making me, even for only a short time, a part of the family.

PENNY NECHANICKY
Acting Associate Director for Operations

Future of VHA (con't)

implementing both rural health and tele-health/tele-medicine initiatives to improve access to care.

But wait there's more...

Over the course of about 20 minutes, Dr. Petzel painted a clear picture of what we can expect (and what he expects of us) over the next few years.

The highlight of his presentation was the new VHA Vision. Dr. Petzel impressed upon each of us to help clearly articulate the new vision so that every employee can relate the work he/she does to the broader vision. He identified the six components of the new VHA vision: patient-centeredness, team care, continuous improvement, population-based, data driven (evidence-based), and value driven. You'll find each of these components seamlessly woven into the just-released new VHA Mission and Vision Statements; a more comprehensive roll-out is forthcoming, so stay tuned!

VHA Mission Statement

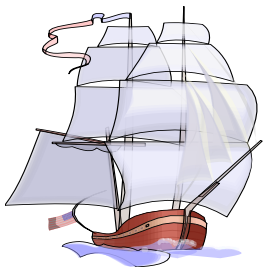
Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well-being

VHA Vision Statement

VHA will continue to be the benchmark of excellence and value in healthcare by providing exemplary services that are both patient-centered and evidence-based

This care will be delivered by engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery and continuous improvement

It will emphasize prevention and population health and contribute to the nation's well-being through education, research and service in National emergencies



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SCC Home Oxygen/Sleep Therapy

Specialty Clinic Corner

1. Overview: The Pulmonary Department cares for Veterans with various lung disorders such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), pulmonary fibrosis, asthma, chronic bronchitis, and sleep disordered breathing/sleep apnea. The Home Oxygen/Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) Program provides services and equipment used to treat these conditions.

2. Treatment Services:

a. Oxygen Clinic: Provides assessment and evaluation for new and follow up patients to determine need for home oxygen services for hypoxemic (inadequate oxygenation of blood) patients meeting established clinical guidelines.

b. CPAP Clinic: Provides education in a group setting about sleep apnea, including individual assessment, as well as the care of the equipment which is also checked at the time of the visit. Treatment with CPAP, BIPAP (Bi-level Positive Airway Pressure) or Adaptive Servo-Ventilation (ASV) is determined based on sleep study results.

c. Inpatient: The Respiratory Therapy Department performs oxygen evaluations and sleep studies. These are then evaluated by the pulmonary attending. Patients with positive testing become part of the Home Oxygen/CPAP Program.

3. Workload: The CPAP clinic had 619 visits in FY09; the Oxygen Clinic had 324 visits in FY09.

4. Patient Education: Group clinic visits are held by the Pulmonary Nurse Practitioner and Respiratory Therapist for CPAP, oxygen, and use of equipment evaluation and teaching.

4. Did you know? Sleep apnea is well known to fragment sleep and cause daytime sleepiness. Untreated sleep apnea puts significant stress on the heart, lungs, and blood pressure. If left untreated for many years, sleep apnea increases the risk of stroke, heart attack, and high blood pressure.

(Article by Jackie Horner, RN, Nurse Manager for Specialty Clinics)

"Future VHA"

(continued from page 1)

arrangements, food is provided, and during the day, many social service agencies and VA staff attend to help Veterans access care in our healthcare system and with community providers. It is also a great time to network with other agencies.

Operation Stand Down will be held on September 17th and 18th at Diamond Hill Park in Cumberland. If anyone is interested in helping out, please contact Dr. Bill Carr at 401-254-8447. We look forward to your joining with our Homeless Program staff and many other VA employees who volunteer to participate in this opportunity for a day of direct service to homeless Veterans. We are confident you would find this to be a very rewarding experience.

(Sean is the Providence VA Medical Center's Homeless / Veterans Justice Outreach Social Worker)



The Case of the Phony Cop

Due to the large number of correct submissions, winners of July's **Intrepid Detective** were selected via a drawing. This month's winners are Julie White, Paul Cunningham, Peter Lombardo, Moustapha Faye, Michael Keach, and Megan Knoll.

Each will receive 2 free movie passes.

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Staff in the News

EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

Mary Fagan, Chief, Materiel Management, and Nancy Crandall, NP, Surgical Service, receive 30-year service awards; Damaris Rohsenow, PhD, Research Service, receives a 25-year service



...Around the PVAMC...

Top: **Cyndee Costello, MHBSS Health Systems Specialist**, receives a farewell certificate on August 26; Cyndee has accepted a new position as the VISN 1 Telecommunications Manager; Bottom: PVAMC employees **Cyndee Costello** and **Michael McRae, TAP Line**, (second from right) pose with Penny Nechanicky, Bill Burney, and Network Director Dr. Michael Mayo-Smith during Mayo-Smith's visit to Providence last month; also, the VA Section of American Psychological Association Division 18 (Psychologists in Public Service) recently recognized **William Carr, PhD, Coordinator of Homeless Programs**, as *Outstanding Psychologist in Psychosocial Rehabilitation* during the Annual APA Convention in San Diego. Dr. Carr recently joined our MHBSS staff and was previously Director of Residential Programs with the Boston VA Healthcare System.



Got Story Ideas?

Please submit your ideas to
Thomas.Antonaccio@va.gov.

PVAMC Website



Need Enrollment Info?

Please call (401) 273-7100, ext. 3300